**Walt Whitman (1819–1892).  Leaves of Grass.  1900.**

[166](http://www.bartleby.com/142/1016.html#166). **O Me! O Life!** 

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| O ME! O life!... of the questions of these recurring; |  |
| Of the endless trains of the faithless—of cities fill’d with the foolish; |  |
| Of myself forever reproaching myself, (for who more foolish than I, and who more faithless?) |  |
| Of eyes that vainly crave the light—of the objects mean—of the struggle ever renew’d; |  |
| Of the poor results of all—of the plodding and sordid crowds I see around me; | *5* |
| Of the empty and useless years of the rest—with the rest me intertwined; |  |
| The question, O me! so sad, recurring—What good amid these, O me, O life? |  |
|  |  |
| *Answer.*  That you are here—that life exists, and identity; |  |
| That the powerful play goes on, and you will contribute a verse. |  |

[208](http://www.bartleby.com/142/1020.html#208). **A Noiseless Patient Spider** 

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| --- | --- |
| A NOISELESS, patient spider, |  |
| I mark’d, where, on a little promontory, it stood, isolated; |  |
| Mark’d how, to explore the vacant, vast surrounding, |  |
| It launch’d forth filament, filament, filament, out of itself; |  |
| Ever unreeling them—ever tirelessly speeding them. | *5* |
|  |  |
| And you, O my Soul, where you stand, |  |
| Surrounded, surrounded, in measureless oceans of space, |  |
| Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing,—seeking the spheres, to connect them; |  |
| Till the bridge you will need, be form’d—till the ductile anchor hold; |  |
| Till the gossamer thread you fling, catch somewhere, O my Soul.  [180](http://www.bartleby.com/142/1018.html#180). **When I heard the Learn’d Astronomer**    |  |  | | --- | --- | | WHEN I heard the learn’d astronomer; |  | | When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me; |  | | When I was shown the charts and the diagrams, to add, divide, and measure them; |  | | When I, sitting, heard the astronomer, where he lectured with much applause in the lecture-room, |  | | How soon, unaccountable, I became tired and sick; | *5* | | Till rising and gliding out, I wander’d off by myself, |  | | In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time, |  | | Look’d up in perfect silence at the stars. |  |   [91](http://www.bartleby.com/142/1009.html#91). **I Hear America Singing**    |  |  | | --- | --- | | I HEAR America singing, the varied carols I hear; |  | | Those of mechanics—each one singing his, as it should be, blithe and strong; |  | | The carpenter singing his, as he measures his plank or beam, |  | | The mason singing his, as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work; |  | | The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat—the deckhand singing on the steamboat deck; | *5* | | The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench—the hatter singing as he stands; |  | | The wood-cutter’s song—the ploughboy’s, on his way in the morning, or at the noon intermission, or at sundown; |  | | The delicious singing of the mother—or of the young wife at work—or of the girl sewing or washing—Each singing what belongs to her, and to none else; |  | | The day what belongs to the day—At night, the party of young fellows, robust, friendly, |  | | Singing, with open mouths, their strong melodious [songs](http://www.bartleby.com/142/1009.html#91.10). |  |   [161](http://www.bartleby.com/142/1016.html#161). **Mannahatta**    |  |  | | --- | --- | | I WAS asking for something specific and perfect for my city, |  | | Whereupon, lo! upsprang the aboriginal [name](http://www.bartleby.com/142/1016.html#161.2)! |  | |  |  | | Now I see what there is in a name, a word, liquid, sane, unruly, musical, self-sufficient; |  | | I see that the word of my city is that word up there, |  | | Because I see that word nested in nests of water-bays, superb, with tall and wonderful spires, | *5* | | Rich, hemm’d thick all around with sailships and steamships—an island sixteen miles long, solid-founded, |  | | Numberless crowded streets—high growths of iron, slender, strong, light, splendidly uprising toward clear skies; |  | | Tide swift and ample, well-loved by me, toward sundown, |  | | The flowing sea-currents, the little islands, larger adjoining islands, the heights, the villas, |  | | The countless masts, the white shore-steamers, the lighters, the ferry-boats, the black sea-steamers well-model’d; | *10* | | The down-town streets, the jobbers’ houses of business—the houses of business of the ship-merchants, and money-brokers—the river-streets; |  | | Immigrants arriving, fifteen or twenty thousand in a week; |  | | The carts hauling goods—the manly race of drivers of horses—the brown-faced sailors; |  | | The summer air, the bright sun shining, and the sailing clouds aloft; |  | | The winter snows, the sleigh-bells—the broken ice in the river, passing along, up or down, with the flood tide or ebb-tide; | *15* | | The mechanics of the city, the masters, well-form’d, beautiful-faced, looking you straight in the eyes; |  | | Trottoirs throng’d—vehicles—Broadway—the women—the shops and shows, |  | | The parades, processions, bugles playing, flags flying, drums beating; |  | | A million people—manners free and superb—open voices—hospitality—the most courageous and friendly young men; |  | | The free city! no slaves! no owners of slaves! | *20* | | The beautiful city, the city of hurried and sparkling waters! the city of spires and masts! |  | | The city nested in bays! my city! |  | | The city of such women, I am mad to be with them! I will return after death to be with them! |  | | The city of such young men, I swear I cannot live happy, without I often go talk, walk, eat, drink, sleep, with them! |  |   [193](http://www.bartleby.com/142/1019.html#193). **O Captain! My Captain!**    |  |  | | --- | --- | | 1  O CAPTAIN! my Captain! our fearful trip is done; |  | | The ship has weather’d every rack, the prize we sought is won; |  | | The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting, |  | | While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring: |  | | But O heart! heart! heart! | *5* | | O the bleeding drops of [red](http://www.bartleby.com/142/1019.html#193.6), |  | | Where on the deck my Captain lies, |  | | Fallen cold and dead. |  | |  |  | | 2  O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells; |  | | Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills; | *10* | | For you bouquets and ribbon’d wreaths—for you the shores a-crowding; |  | | For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning; |  | | Here Captain! dear father! |  | | This arm beneath your [head](http://www.bartleby.com/142/1019.html#193.14); |  | | It is some dream that on the deck, | *15* | | You’ve fallen cold and dead. |  | |  |  | | 3  My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still; |  | | My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will; |  | | The ship is anchor’d safe and sound, its voyage closed and done; |  | | From fearful trip, the victor ship, comes in with object won; | *20* | | Exult, O shores, and ring, O bells! |  | | But I, with [mournful](http://www.bartleby.com/142/1019.html#193.22) tread, |  | | Walk the deck my Captain lies, |  | | Fallen cold and dead. |  |   1  I CELEBRATE myself, and sing myself, And what I assume you shall assume, For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.  I loafe and invite my soul, I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass.  My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil,      this air, Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and      their parents the same, I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health begin, Hoping to cease not till death.  Creeds and schools in abeyance, Retiring back a while sufficed at what they are, but never      forgotten, I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard, Nature without check with original energy.  51  The past and present wilt — I have fill'd them, emptied them, And proceed to fill my next fold of the future.  Listener up there! what have you to confide to me? Look in my face while I snuff the sidle of evening, (Talk honestly, no one else hears you, and I stay only a      minute longer.)  Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself, (I am large, I contain multitudes.)  I concentrate toward them that are nigh, I wait on the door-slab.  Who has done his day's work? who will soonest be through      with his supper? Who wishes to walk with me?  Will you speak before I am gone? will you prove already too      late?  52  The spotted hawk swoops by and accuses me, he complains      of my gab and my loitering.  I too am not a bit tamed, I too am untranslatable, I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.  The last scud of day holds back for me, It flings my likeness after the rest and true as any on the      shadow'd wilds, It coaxes me to the vapor and the dusk.  I depart as air, I shake my white locks at the runaway sun, I effuse my flesh in eddies, and drift it in lacy jags.  I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love, If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles.  You will hardly know who I am or what I mean, But I shall be good health to you nevertheless, And filter and fibre your blood.  Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged, Missing me one place search another, I stop somewhere waiting for you.  1855                                                                   1881 |  |